

got a reply. The Review board, having carefully considered our request, had this to say: "It is not in the national security interest of the United States, to confirm or deny the existence of the documents you have requested."

Senators, I conclude my testimony today, by suggesting to you that I have yet to hear any possible reason why it would not be in the national security interest of the United States for you and for the American people to learn the truth about Li Ka-shing and his ties to Red China, the new Gatekeeper of the Panama Canal. It is very important to the national security interests of our country, with no threat to the sovereignty, freedom and future prosperity of our good friends in Panama who I respect and appreciate, if we all learned the truth about Li Ka-shing, and if the U.S. Congress forced a change in the current policy of the United States at Panama.

I have reported in my book, about the prospects for a new missile crisis in Panama. China currently has added to its inventory of 18 ICBMS, the majority aimed our way. Senators are aware that they have many more short range and intermediate range nuclear missiles—148 at last count, and growing. It is so farfetched to imagine some of those missiles being quietly put on container ships and offloaded at the Hutchison-Whampoa port facilities?

These are the same people that managed to get 2,000 AK47 rifles smuggled into the United States. The same people who are smuggling drugs (through their growing Red-China controlled gang connection to the FARC narco-guerrillas to the North in Colombia) into Panama and illegals into Panama. Why not a couple dozen intermediate range and/or short range nuclear missiles? Can you imagine the next "Cuban missile crisis" taking place after the missiles have all been set up? Or worse, after they have all been fired?

This scenario has been confirmed as a possibility by Admiral Thomas Moorer, USN (Ret.), and by a former commander of all U.S. ground forces in Panama, Major General Richard Anson, both members of our National Security Center Retired Military Officers Advisory Board of 80 officers. Many other retired officers have confirmed this scenario for me. If the Peoples Republic of China, through corporate agents such as COSCO and Hutchison-Whampoa aka Panama Ports Company, decides to quietly move some short range and intermediate range nuclear missiles into Panama and set them up on wheels ready to fire on short notice at the port facilities, the United States might not even know this has happened—unless and until they want us to know.

Other than bland reassurances by the same people who laughed at Ronald Reagan's demand, "Trust but Verify" during negotiations with Mr. Gorbachev, what can Senators offer concerned constituents?

Senators, we desperately need a continued U.S. military presence in Panama. To challenge Red China's new role as Gatekeeper of the Panama Canal. Or else within the next ten years, Chinese will be the new second language of Panama, and our vital security interests at Panama will be secure only at the sufferance of Communist China.

The people of Panama and the United States have worked in harmony for nearly a century, to keep the Panama Canal open, operational and secure. If President Clinton's policy is allowed to stand, the Peoples Republic of China, through Li Ka-shing, China's Red billionaire, will be the unchallenged, unwatched Gatekeeper of the Panama Canal.

I suggest to Senators a range of policy options for immediate adoption. Foremost, any

policy enacted should be done with recognition that the Constitution of the United States empowers our Congress as a co-equal branch of government with the President, not as his subordinate. As a co-equal, that means that acquiescence in the current policy translates into responsibility for what is happening, and for the disastrous catastrophe that faces United States servicemen who will be called upon to fix the problem at the price of their blood in the future.

Second, I suggest to Senators that any policy they enact should be done with recognition that the people of Panama are very interested in continuing to work with the United States, provided we pay a fair rent for military bases, provided we hire back workers who have served as well in the past on a seniority basis and for fair compensation. We should not be turning our backs on our friends in Panama and walking away just because Bill Clinton wants to reenact Vietnam at Panama. If we suggest such a policy, if we respect the sovereignty, the freedom, the economic needs of our friends in Panama, if we make such an offer, in my view, the political leadership of Panama will yield to what the people of Panama want. We will have a future with U.S. servicemen helping keep the Panama Canal open, operational and safe into the future.

In conclusion, I pray that Senators will create a new policy for the U.S. at Panama, one in keeping with these sentiments of Senator Trent Lott, when he called upon Chairman Warner to convene today's Senate Armed Services Committee hearings: "the transfer of control of the Panama Canal is one of the critical national security issues currently facing our nation and its impact will be felt for many generations to come."

HONORING AMERICA'S VETERANS

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 16, 1999

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, President Calvin Coolidge once said, "The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten." Last week, Americans proudly celebrated the last Veterans' Day of the century in honor of those brave men and women who so valiantly and selflessly served our great nation during times of peace, confrontation, and war.

Americans owe its brave defenders a tremendous debt indeed—one which will probably never be fully understood by some, nor completely repaid by all. Veterans' Day should reignite year-long gratitude for the sacrifices made in the name of the U.S.A.

We live in a country unrivaled in terms of prosperity, liberty, security, and opportunity. Every child born in America is embraced by a nation blessed with the richest economy in the world, the highest regard for unalienable rights, and the most abundant personal freedom in the history of human civilization.

The comfort, benefits and opportunity we all enjoy, and often take for granted, do not exist but for America's veterans. Commending their service is among our greatest national traditions wherein we all recognize our very liberty has been preserved by their valor and courage.

The veterans' legacy, nearly six decades of domestic tranquility, has ironically and unfortunately fostered an unmistakable complacency among an entire generation unfamiliar with the

horrors of war. While Veterans' Day is first about veterans, Mr. Speaker, it is also about children.

It is the prayer of every veteran I know that each American child may comprehend freedom's price borne by millions of American soldiers over the course of our 223-year history. The liberty we enjoy today has always been an expensive and sacred privilege. Conveying these precepts to America's youth is perhaps the most profound way to honor all veterans.

Veterans also deserve a country committed to providing the benefits and assistance promised in return for defending it. This year, Congress made progress in reversing a troubling trend of woefully underfunded veteran programs. In my opinion it did not go far enough or raise the priority of veterans high enough to counteract the years of neglect.

Mr. Speaker, currently, the median age of America's World War II veterans is 77 years. More than 9 million veterans are 65 years of age or older, accounting for over a third of the veteran population.

Like all aging Americans, these men and women require medical and retirement services, particularly those who sustained permanent and disabling injuries in the line of duty. Resultant long-term medical treatment means staggering medical bills and mounting insurance fees.

After long years of service and patriotism, veterans should be able to count on the rest of us for support. We owe them nothing less. As a Member of Congress, I remain wholly committed to protecting the critical programs serving veterans and retired military members.

In addition to cosponsoring several important measures to ensure adequate Medicare coverage and increased retirement pay for veterans and military retirees, I helped pass the Veteran's Millennium Care Act, which expands veterans' eligibility for health care, and the services they receive. Mr. Speaker, this legislation reinforces new efforts to make certain veterans with severe, service-related disabilities receive the long-term care they require.

This year, Mr. Speaker, as the nation celebrates Veterans' Day, it is important to give thanks and to take inspiration from the great sacrifices of the brave men and women who have delivered our mighty nation. And in commemorating the achievements of America's veterans, we should all recommit our own lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor to the maintenance of liberty—just as the veterans we now honor have so nobly done.

RECOGNIZING TORNADO RELIEF WORKERS

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 16, 1999

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend 45 young men, fathers, and boys who invested their time and effort to assist the citizens of Cincinnati, Ohio in recovering from a devastating tornado earlier this year. With hard work and diligence, and at their own expense, these men selflessly served homeowners in clearing debris, removing uprooted trees, and repairing roofs from April 16–30, 1999.